

Oct. 9, 2018

Department of Public Instruction wins federal grant for pilot program to enhance substance abuse and mental health services

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has awarded an \$8.8 million grant to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in support of NC Project ACTIVATE, a five-year program that increases mental health awareness for students, provides training for staff in recognizing and accommodating students with mental health needs, continues research into early prevention plans for substance abuse, and more.

The federal 2018 Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) grants are awarded to state education agencies with the goal to build or expand their capacity to oversee school-aged youth and local education agencies. North Carolina's demonstration project will receive a total of \$8.8 million over five years.

Three school districts have been chosen for the pilot: Cleveland County Schools, Rockingham County Schools, and Beaufort County Schools.

The DPI Exceptional Children division will collaborate with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services to fulfill the grant's duties and initiatives, including:

- improving school engagement and decreasing school disciplinary events for pre-school through 12th grade;
- reducing the school dropout rate, rate of attempted suicide, and substance use by increasing the number of at-risk students receiving supplemental and intensive mental-health and substance-use supports;
- improving mental-health supports and services through increased family and community-agency engagement; and
- training school staff to recognize and respond to student mental-health needs.

"This pilot program fits well into our focus on mental health needs and school safety," said Maria Pitre-Martin, deputy superintendent of district support. "We hope to show academic and behavioral results in these three districts that we can then scale statewide."

The \$8.8 million funding begins with \$1.7 million this federal fiscal year, which started Oct. 1.